

**COMMON
EARTH**

Alive & Unfired

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INTRODUCTION

The ideological confines of working within a given "discipline" can be suffocating to any artist. Many who work in clay have come to find "ceramics" constricting, either because of its functional implications, or because of its long history of being fired. Over the centuries, "ceramics" has become synonymous with the firing process, which renders irreversible changes on the clay. Fired forms can be broken but not destroyed, the high temperatures having transformed the clay's physical structure forever. Yet, throughout the growth of knowledge about this process, there has been a continuing tradition of those who leave their clay unfired.

Raw clay houses over one-third of the world's population. Nomadic peoples still form utensils out of it as they did thousands of years ago, and there are adobe ruins the world over dating as far back as the third millennium B.C. Yet, until the late 1960's, the artistic capabilities of raw clay went virtually unnoted. It was not until that time, through the works of the Earth Art sculptors and process/installation artists, that unfired clay began to form part of the art mainstream. Feeling the contemporary art market alienated maker from made and art from life, these artists began to employ earthen materials, most outdoors, but some returning documentation or actual works to the gallery. Repercussions of these movements led many to experiment with raw substances through the 1970's and into the '80's, and clay has drawn particular focus for its long history of interaction with human development.

Today this focus has an increasing clarity of reference to antiquity in respect to our ever more tenuous existence. There are a handful of people using unfired clay in their art in Australia. Those represented here come from several cultural backgrounds, exemplifying a varied approach to a mutual material. Warping, cracking and drying, held tight by concrete or photography, we see here uncommon concepts, brought together only by common earth.

Marie Sierra-Hughes
1985.

ISBN O 85901 281 6

Curated by Penny Smith and Marie Sierra-Hughes

The University of Tasmania Fine Arts Gallery, June 4 – July 5, 1985.

The Fine Arts Committee and the Curators wish to acknowledge the assistance of Sally McGillivray, Jon Williamson, Penny Hawson, the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board and the Crafts Board of the Australia Council.



GREG WAIN

BORN

1943 Melbourne

SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 1976, 78 Warehouse Gallery, Melbourne: Sculpture and Drawing.
1977 Craft Centre, South Yarra, Victoria: Ceramics.
1979 Bonython Gallery, Adelaide, S.A.: Ceramics.
1980 Gryphon Gallery, Melbourne: Sculpture and Drawing.
1982, 83 Distelfink Gallery, Hawthorn, Vic.: Ceramics.
1984 Mark Widdup Gallery, Newcastle, N.S.W.: Ceramics and Sculpture.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1976 Small Sculpture Biennial, Budapest, Hungary.
Concorso Internazionale Della Ceramica D'Arte, Faenza, Italy.
1979 Mayfair Ceramic Award, Sydney.
1980 Collection Pieces, National Gallery of Victoria.
1981 All White Show, Gryphon Gallery, Melbourne.
1981, 82 Australian Crafts '81 & '82, Meat Market Craft Centre, Melbourne.
1982 Contemporary Australian Ceramics, Touring Exhibition, U.S.A. and New Zealand.
1984 Darling Downs 1st National Ceramic Award, Toowoomba, Qld.
Alice Springs Ceramics Acquisition, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs.

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Victoria.
Crafts Board Collection.
Victorian State Craft Collection, Meat Market, Vic.
Art Gallery of Western Australia.
Regional Galleries including: Newcastle, Bathurst, Benalla, Launceston, Latrobe Valley.
Artbank.
City of Caulfield Art Collection, Vic.
Shire of Diamond Valley Collection, Vic.
Institute Collections, Melbourne C.A.E.
Gippsland Institute, Latrobe Valley, Vic.
Chisholm Institute.
Jackson Collection, Geelong Art Gallery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

G. Boorman: *Ceramics of the World*, Dusseldorf, 1983.
"Issues of Pottery in Australia", *Craft Australia* and *Craft Victoria*.



STATEMENT

Represented here is one aspect of my current work. That more often seen is of a decorative nature, generally plates. As in the sculptural pieces the plates rely, to a great extent, on the process of making for their aesthetic content.

These works are concerned with the forms, spaces, feelings, related to man-made environments. They are often contrasted with the apparent random quality associated with naturally occurring forms in landscape/geology. Many of the processes involved (and often the materials themselves) are derived from building techniques and methods and intend to use sculpturally the spaces, surfaces and structures of building.



MARIE SIERRA-HUGHES

BORN

1961 Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

STUDIES

- 1981 Associate of Arts, Tulsa Junior College, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1983 Bachelor of Fine Arts Cum Laude, Ceramics, University of Tulsa.
1984-85 Presently Master of Fine Arts Programme, University of Tasmania, School of Art.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 1980-81 Art Department Lab Assistant, Tulsa Junior College.
1982 Ceramics Department Assistant, University of Tulsa.
Instructor, Johnson Atelier Art Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1981-84 Apprentice Metalsmith to W.R. Derrevere, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1983-84 Instructor, Philbrook Museum School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, conducting classes in Drawing, Ceramics and Metalsmithing.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 1980, 81 Tulsa Junior College Student Work, juried exhibition, honorable mention in 1980.
1982 Bartlesville Craft Show, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, juried exhibition.
1982, 83 Gussman Annual Student Art Exhibit, University of Tulsa, juried exhibition.
1983 Guest Exhibitor, Tulsa Designer Craftsmen Show, Tulsa.
Arkansas Art Center 16th Annual Prints, Drawings and Crafts Exhibition, Little Rock, Arkansas, juried exhibition, honorable mention.
1984 "Chosen Works", Johnson Atelier, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1985 Student Representatives Exhibition, Fourth National Ceramics Conference, Melbourne, in connection with the lecture delivered at Student Forum, "Unfired Clay in Art and History", representing the State of Tasmania.
"Handle with Care", Tasmanian School of Art Ceramics at Chisholm Institute of Technology, Melbourne.

AWARDS

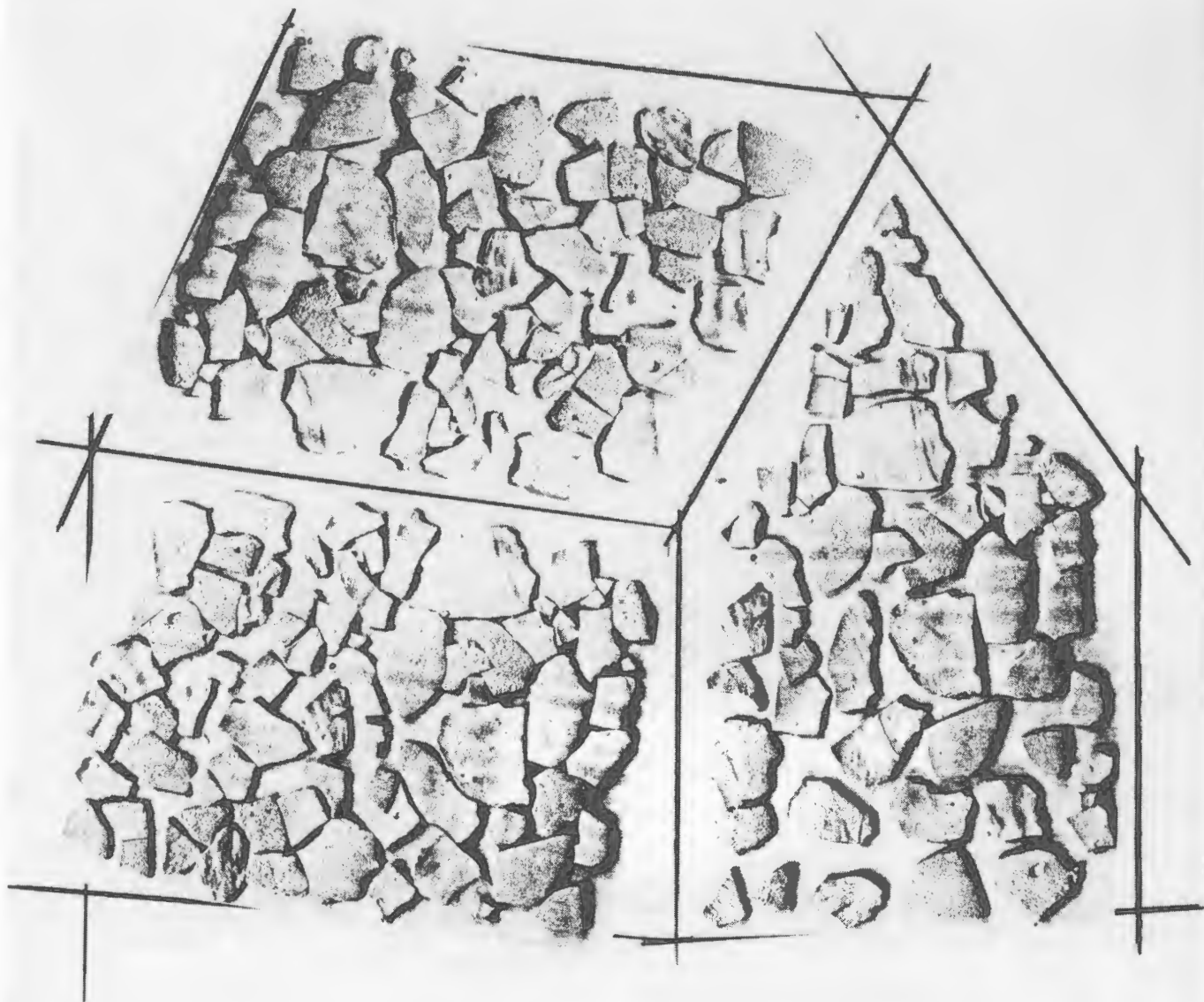
- 1979-81 Fee Waiver Scholarship, Tulsa Junior College.
1981-83 General Scholarship, University of Tulsa.
1982 Mager Mortgage Company Grant, University of Tulsa.
1985 Postgraduate Course Award, University of Tasmania, School of Art.



STATEMENT

The main source of energy for my concepts is decay, especially the paradoxical deterioration of "permanent" markers of past civilizations. The monuments and public buildings of lost cultures, as well as tombstones, sarcophagi and other markers of "endurance" all take on an ironic context when seen in a state of decomposition. They become poignant reminders of our own impermanence, resonating through our time as they mark their own. The sculptural use of clay is my avenue for the artistic exploration of "permanent" structures, and in an unfired state it speaks even more clearly of entropy.

Gothic forms are especially of interest, with their implications of power and other-worldliness, all distilled in what is actually a negative space. Working with this form, making it a positive object or vessel-like through inversion, reveals it as a symbol, an ideological construct, as subject to decomposition as the monument itself.



KAY GILL

BORN

1943 South Australia.

STUDIES

1985 Presently 3rd year B.F.A. student, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

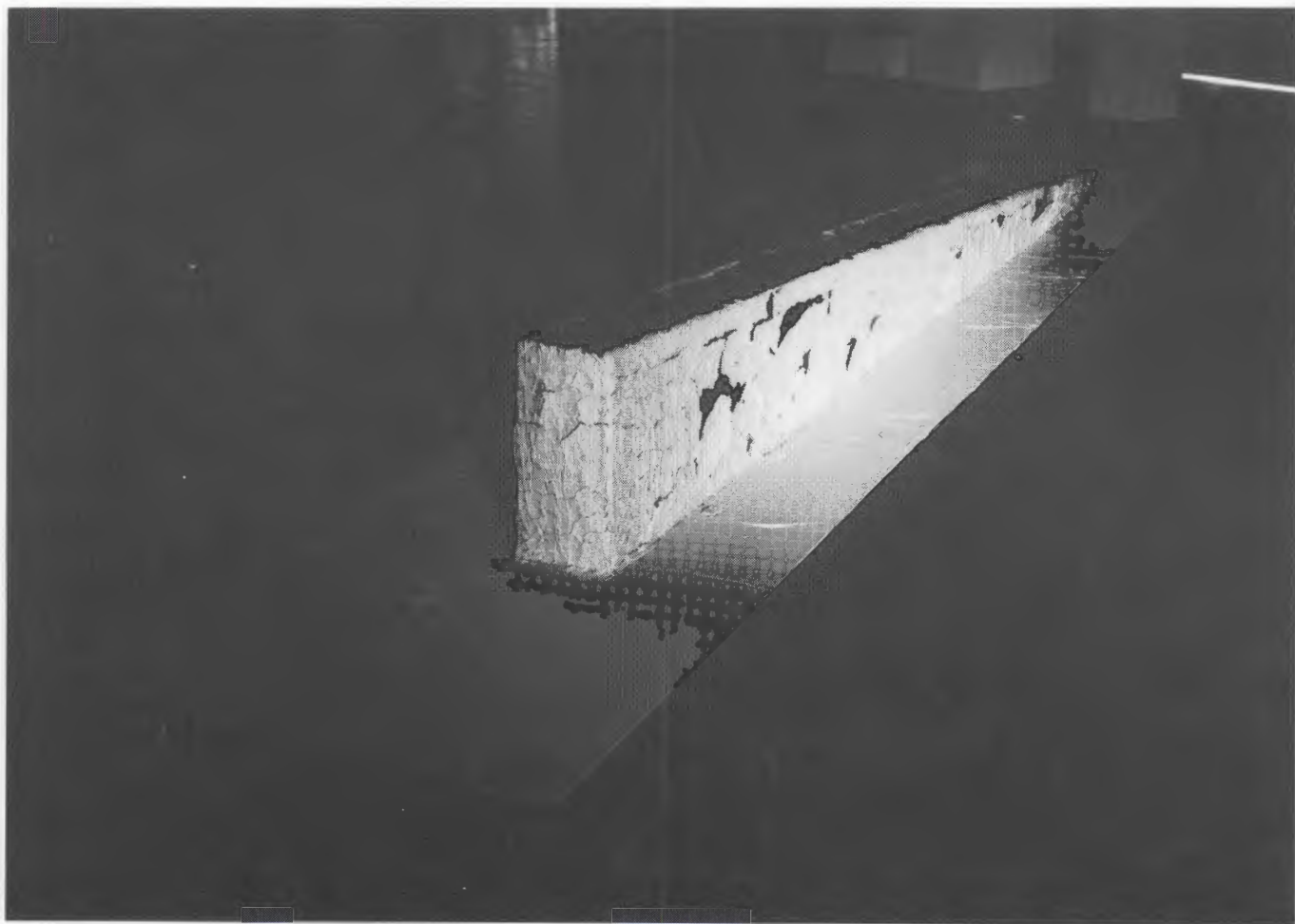
1985 "Handle with Care", Tasmanian School of Art Ceramics at Chisholm Institute of Technology, Melbourne.



STATEMENT

The use of the house as a vehicle for artistic expression, and an interest in and concern for the natural environment has been the impetus of my recent work.

The ability of unfired clay to be permanent, semi-permanent, or impermanent, to express the evolution and devolution of matter, along with the need to immerse myself in the rhythm of the making process make clay, for me, an ideal material.



MITSUO SHOJI

BORN

1946 Osaka, Japan

STUDIES

1965-67 Studied painting, sculpture, basic arts and design at the Art Institute of Osaka City Museum.
 1967-71 Ceramics at Kyoto City University of Fine Arts – Graduated with BFA.
 1971-73 Ceramics at the same University as above – Graduated with MFA.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1973-74 Caulfield Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia.
 1975 National Art School (East Sydney Technical College), Sydney, Australia.
 California State University, San Jose, California, USA.
 1976-77 Eko School of Ceramics & Osaka School of Art, Osaka, Japan.
 1977 California State University, San Jose, California, USA.
 1978 Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney, Australia.

SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

1977 Nakamiya Gallery, Osaka, Japan.
 Iteza Gallery, Kyoto, Japan.
 1979 David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney.
 1980 Victor Mace Art Gallery, Brisbane.
 "Clay Work", NSW University, Sydney.
 1981 "Black Firing & Clay Painting", Sydney.
 1982 "Ceramics", Gryphon Gallery, Victoria State College, Melbourne.
 "Recent Pottery" by Peter Rushforth and Mitsuo Shoji, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1979 Selected work for Australian Craft touring show to Europe.
Mayfair Ceramics Exhibition, Sydney.
- 1981 Mayfair Ceramics Exhibition, Melbourne.
"Ceramics" show, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Alexander Mackie College, Sydney.
- 1982 "Image and Origin", Australia Craft Council Gallery, Sydney.
"Recent Ceramics Show", Wollongong City Gallery, NSW.
"Ceramics Show", Penrith Art Gallery, Penrith, NSW.
Fletcher Brown Built Pottery Award, Auckland, New Zealand.
"Concorso Internazionale Della Ceramica", Faenza, Italy.
"International Raku" show, Galerie le Uzes, France.
- 1983 "A Different Perspective", Opening show at Art Space, Sydney.
"Clothes and Clay Exhibition", Orange Arts Festival, Orange.
Ceramics Show, Penrith Art Gallery, Penrith, NSW.
"New Directions", Jam Factory Craft Centre, 2nd Australian Potters Conference, Adelaide, SA
"Ceramics - Objects and Figures", University of Tasmania and Travelling Show in Tasmania.
"New Directions", Distelfink Gallery, Melbourne
"Asian Interface: Australia/Japan", Crafts Council Centre Gallery, Sydney.
Project 43, New South Wales Art Gallery, Sydney.

COLLECTIONS

Faenza International Ceramics Museum, Faenza, Italy.
Australian National Gallery, Canberra, Australia.
National Gallery of Victoria, Australia.
Queensland Art Gallery, Australia.
The Art Gallery of Western Australia, Australia.
Newcastle Art Gallery, Australia.
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Australia.
Shepparton Art Gallery, Australia.
Arrarat Art Gallery, Australia.
Brisbane Civic Art Gallery and Museum, Qld, Australia.
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney.
Meat Market (Victoria Craft Museum, Melbourne).
Macquarie State College.
Kelvin Grove College of Advanced Education, Brisbane.
Churchlands College of Advanced Education, W.A.
School of Art, Brisbane, Qld.
Memphis Academy of Art, Tennessee, USA.
California State University, San Jose, USA
Artbank.

AWARDS

- 1976 "City Art Exhibition", 1st Prize Yomiuri press award, Osaka, Japan.
- 1982 Hunters Hill Craft Awards, Sydney, Australia.
Purchasing Award, "Faenza International Ceramics Show", Faenza, Italy.



COMMISSIONS

- 1974 Presentation of platter to Prime Minister Gough Whitlam from principal of Caulfield Institute of Technology, Melbourne.
- 1980 Selected work by Craft Board to Australian Embassy, New Delhi, India.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Frequent mention in *Pottery in Australia* and *Craft Australia*.

STATEMENT

I am a potter who makes pots, plates and tableware. However, I believe that ceramics should not only be used in that traditional manner, but also could be treated differently, although using the same processes.

Therefore, I sometimes use clay in its raw, unfired state or fire different materials such as wood or metallic leaf.

I am greatly impressed by Australian bushfires both aesthetically and physically. To discover that the native plants need fire in order to release their seeds from their tough seed pods was exciting. I am not a religious person but I feel a parallel between bushfires and the Buddhist concept of cremation, when a soul passes from this world to the next.

I would like to make a statement about my work:

*Black and white is my base world
Colours are my emotions
Forms are the essential territory of my mind
Clay is my body
Fire is my spirit*



HOSSEIN VALAMANESH

BORN

1949 Tehran, Iran.

STUDIES

1970 Graduated, School of Fine Art, Tehran.
 1974 Travelled to Central Australia as Art Advisor with Aboriginal children.
 1977 Graduated, South Australian School of Art.

SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

1972 Shiraz University, Tehran.
 1977 Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide.
 1980 Festival Centre Gallery, Adelaide.
 1981 Bonython Art Gallery, Adelaide.
 Praxis Gallery, Perth.
 Execution Installation, Roundspace Gallery, Adelaide.
 1983 Bonython Art Gallery, Adelaide.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1978 Group Show, Royal Art Society of South Australia.
 Adelaide University Gallery.
 1979 Installation, Experimental Art Foundation.
 Four Young Artists, Contemporary Art Society Gallery, Adelaide.
 1980 Designed Roundspace Project for Adelaide Festival of Art — Alternatives (Dwelling), sponsored by the Art Gallery of S.A.
 Canberra Group Exhibition, Arts Council Gallery Installation, Roundspace Gallery, Adelaide.
 1981 First Australian Sculpture triennale, Latrobe University, Melbourne.
 Centenary Exhibition, Art Gallery of South Australia.
 Relics and Rituals, National Gallery of Victoria.
 Art Gallery of Western Australia.
 1982 Roundspace Members' Festival Exhibition.
 1983 Installation, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney.
 Survey of recent South Australian Sculpture, Art Gallery of S.A.
 Anzart-in-Hobart, Hobart.
 1984 26 Characters — Artists' Week, Adelaide.
 Small Wonders, Roundspace Members, Adelaide Festival.
 Australian Sculpture, Art Gallery of Western Australia.
 On Site, Tasmanian School of Art Gallery, Hobart.
 1985 "Singular and Plural", S.A. School of Art Gallery.

AWARDS

1976 Lidums' Art Gallery Prize for students.
 1978 Protege Prize, Masters' Choice Exhibition, Adelaide Festival of Arts.
 1979-80 Visual Arts Board Grant.
 1980 Artist-in-Residence, Praxis, Western Australia.
 1982 Visual Arts Board Grant.
 1983 Artist-in-Residence, Mt. Gambier, South Australia.

COMMISSIONS

1982 Commission for an environmental sculpture at South Australian College of Arts and Education.
 1985 Commission for sculpture for the Atrium of Commonwealth Centre, Adelaide.

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Victoria.
 Art Gallery of South Australia.
 Adelaide College of Arts and Education.
 Artbank.
 Art Gallery of Western Australia.
 Western Australian Institute of Technology.
 Australian National Gallery, Canberra.
 Queensland Art Gallery.
 Alice Springs Art Centre.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Advertiser (S.A.) [19/7/1978; 5/3/1980; 20/8/1980; 26/6/82; 5/10/83].

Art in Australia, Vol.19, 1981; Vol.20, No.3, Autumn 1983; Vol.21, No.3, Autumn 1984.

Artlink, Vol.1, No.4, Autumn, 1983; Vol.2, No.2, May-June 1982; Vol.3, No.5, Autumn, 1984.

Art Network, 3-4, Autumn, 1984.

Aspect No. 29/30, Autumn, 1984.

Australian (19/7/1978; 17/7/1981; 5/10/1983; 19-20/5/84.

Ikebana Ohara (Japan) No.393, 8/1983.

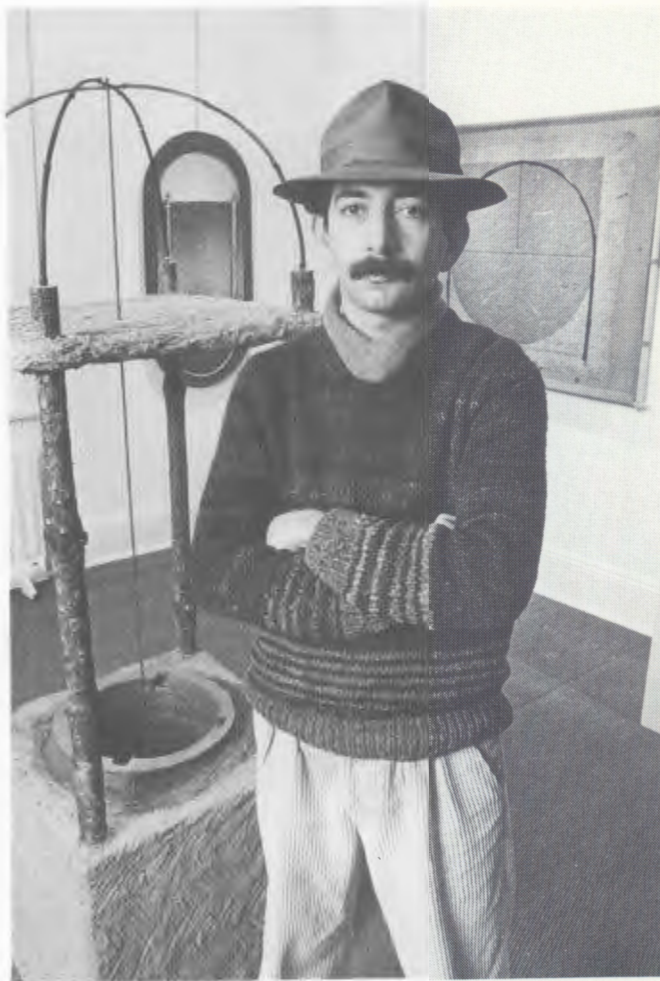
News (S.A.) 20/8/1980.

Words and Visions, No.13/14, Summer, 1983.

On Site (catalogue), Tasmanian School of Art publication, Nov. 1984.

Australian Perspecta 1981, catalogue.

Singular and Plural 1985 catalogue, S.A. School of Art.



STATEMENT

I have been recently concerned with creating images of balance, tranquility and peace — things which we seem to lack in our lives.

Some people think my work has religious connotations; the association of my being from Iran suggests Islam, but I find that unfortunate. It is understandable however because of the Iconic feeling, the symmetry of the forms. I hope people will begin to look at it from a spiritual rather than a religious view point.

I use simple geometric designs, the square, circle or triangle and their 3 dimensional variations as containers and within them I put what I want to say or show. This way I am less preoccupied with working out new formats for my work.

Over the last 8 or 9 years I have used a variety of natural materials like earth and coloured pigments, sand, sticks, stone, wood, water, fire and others. My use of such materials has evolved slowly. At times the ideas have dictated the materials. I have also introduced the element of time by using growing plants, trees or oil burners.



JOHN DAVIS

BORN

1936 Australia.

SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 1969 Strines Gallery, Melbourne, Vic.
- 1971 Watters Gallery, Sydney, N.S.W.
- 1972 Gallery One Eleven, Brisbane, Qld.
- 1974 Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne, Vic.
- 1975 Monash University, Melbourne, Vic.
C.A.S. Gallery, Adelaide, S.A.
- 1977 Watters Gallery, Sydney, N.S.W.
- 1978 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.
- 1979 Art Projects, Melbourne, Vic.
Watters Gallery, Sydney, N.S.W.

- 1980 Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Qld.
Wollongong City Gallery, Wollongong, N.S.W.
Q Space Annex, Brisbane, Qld.
Q Space, Brisbane, Qld.
- 1981 Art Projects, Melbourne, Vic.
Watters Gallery, Sydney, N.S.W.
- 1982 Ina Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.
Ryo Gallery, Kyoto, Japan.
- 1983 Art Projects, Melbourne, Vic.
Gallery Anri, Nagoya, Japan.
- 1984 The University of Southern California Atelier,
Los Angeles, U.S.A.
- 1985 Watters Gallery, Sydney, N.S.W.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

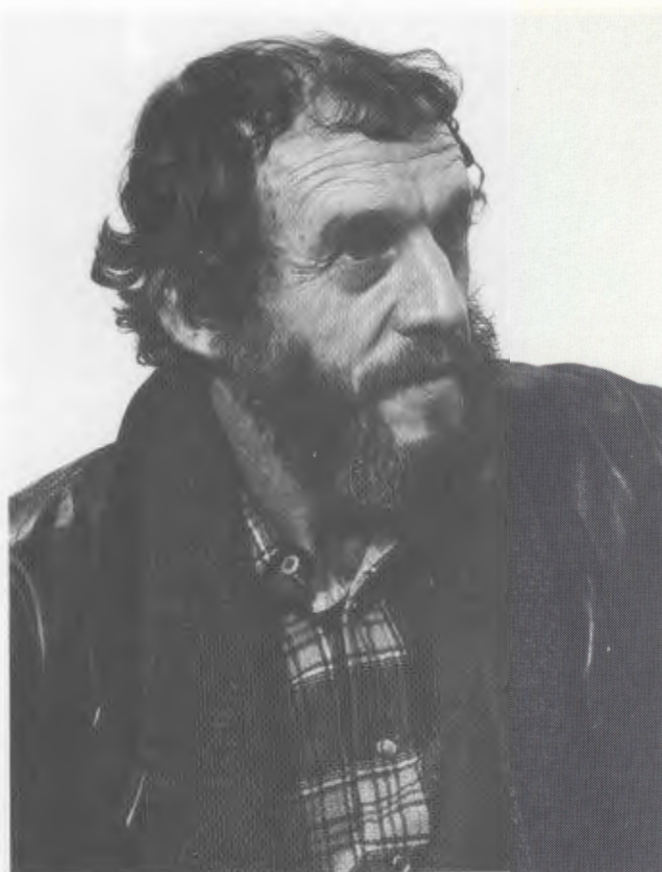
- 1975 Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Mildura, Vic.
Ewing Gallery, Melbourne University, Vic.
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.
- 1976 Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, S.A.
Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of N.S.W.,
Sydney.
- 1978 Fourth Indian Triennial, New Delhi, India.
Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Mildura, Vic.
Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy.
Beach Work, Chalamandal, India.
- 1979 Art Projects, Melbourne.
- 1980 Fifteen Sculptors, Travelling Exhibition, Victoria
and N.S.W.
Lake Wakatipu Installation, New Zealand.
Markers One, Two, Three, Piamena, Tasmania.
Landscape ⇌ Art, two-way reaction, Australian
National Gallery at the Australian National Uni-
versity, Canberra, A.C.T.
First Australian Sculpture Triennial, Latrobe
University, Melbourne Vic.
Perspecta '81, Art Gallery of N.S.W., Sydney.
Art Projects, Melbourne, Vic.
Relics and Rituals, National Gallery of Vic-
toria, Melbourne, Vic.
- 1983 Biannual Survey of Contemporary Australian
Art No.1 Installation, Art Gallery of Western
Australia, Perth.
'Continuum', exhibition of Australian Art,
Tokyo, Lunami Gallery.
'Asian Interface', Crafts Centre, Sydney, N.S.W.
- 1984 'Australian Sculpture', Art Gallery of Western
Australia, Perth, W.A.
'Australia: Nine Contemporary Artists', Los
Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los
Angeles, Calif., U.S.A.
Elysian Park Installation, Los Angeles, Calif.,
U.S.A.
Acquisitions and Alternatives Sculpture, Mon-
ash University, Melbourne.
Second Australian Sculpture Triennial, Nat-
ional Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Sculptors as Craftsmen, Meat Market Craft
Centre, Melbourne.
- 1985 'Singular and Plural', a look at Australian Sculp-
ture 1975-1985, South Australian School of
Art, Adelaide, S.A.

COLLECTIONS

Australian National Gallery, Canberra, A.C.T.
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.
Shepparton City Art Gallery, Victoria.
Geelong City Art Gallery, Victoria.
Mildura City Art Gallery, Victoria.
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Hobart Art Gallery, Tasmania.
Wollongong City Art Gallery, N.S.W.
Brisbane Art Gallery, Queensland.
Newcastle Region Art Gallery, N.S.W.
Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, W.A.
Melbourne State College, Victoria.
Brisbane Teachers College, Queensland.
Flinders University, South Australia.
Launceston School of Art, Tasmania.
Monash University, Victoria.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

'Non-Mimetic Realism', Gary Catalano, *Arts Melbourne 1*,
Data Arte 19, Noel Sheridan.
Art International, July 1977, Elwyn Lynn.
Data Arte 26, Tommaso Trini.
Survey One, Robert Lindsay, National Gallery of Victoria.
Quadrant, October 1978, The Venice Biennale, Elwyn Lynn.
Australian catalogue, Venice Biennale, 1978, Elwyn Lynn,
Norbert Loeffler.
Official catalogue, Venice Biennale, 1978, Daniel Thomas,
Norbert Loeffler.
Catalogue, *Two Australian Artists at the Fourth Indian*
Triennial, 1978, Norbert Loeffler.
Catalogue, *Place*, Monash University, 1975, Noel Hutchison.
The Development of Australian Sculpture 1788-1975,
Graeme Sturgeon, Thames and Hudson.
Art International, October 1978, The Venice Biennale,
Henry Martin.
Actual Art, *Skira Annual* 79, 'Model of History', Skira.
Art International, Vol. XXII/5-6, 1978, Elwyn Lynn.
Australian Sculptors, Ken Scarlett, Nelson.
Actual Art, *Skira Annual*, Special Issue 1970-1980, Skira.
Art in America, January 1981, Report from Australia,
Suzi Gablik.
Art and Australia, Autumn '81, Report from Australia,
Part 1, Suzi Gablik.
Art and Australia, Summer '81, Mildura Rides Again, Graeme
Sturgeon.
Artlink, May 1981, Common Culture: Community Sculpture
Rosemary Brooks.
Art and Australia, Summer '82, John Davis at Watters, Ken
Scarlett.
In No.9, December 1981, Exchange of Contemporary Work
(Japanese publication).
Ikebana Sogetsu, No.145, December 1982 (Japanese pub-
lication).
Ikebana Ryusei, No.273, 1983, Rod O'Brien (Japanese pub-
lication).
Art International, Vol. XXII/5-6, 1978, Elwyn Lynn.



Ikebana Ryusei, No.227, 1979, Unvisualised Aspects of
Sculpture, Kyosuke Nakahara (Japanese publication).
The Geijutsu-Shincho, November 1982 (Japanese pub-
lication).
Ikebana Ohara, No.393, August 1983 (Japanese publication).
Ikebana Ryusei, No.283, (Japanese publication).
Australian Art Review, Warner Associates Publ., 1983, Pro-
vincialism, Pluralism, and Professionalism, Leon Paroissien.
Sculpture, Graeme Sturgeon.
Asian Interface, Australia-Japan, Dr. Peter Emmett, *Craft*
Australia, Summer 1983/84.
Continuum '83 Review, Tadashi Akatsu, *Art Network*,
Spring 1984.
In the Public Eye, Public Art in Australia, Neville Weston.
Sculpture at Mildura, Graeme Sturgeon, T & V James Off-
set Printing, Mildura.

STATEMENT

Since 1976 I have been able to work in my studio and in
the natural environment — both kinds of work relating to
each other by common bonds of space utilization, and
materials employed in the work's construction. Differences
occur when I choose to make an object in the bush or a
beach; from the materials at hand on the site, which in
turn specifically relate to scale and natural setting, evolves
a piece which is specially related to that place both in mood
and sense of time.

I think that the pieces that I make, either in the studio or
in the natural environment have a "sense of place".



NIGEL HELYER

BORN

1951 Hampshire, United Kingdom.

STUDIES

West Sussex College of Design (Foundation Year).
1974 Liverpool College of Fine Art, B.A. (Fine Arts).
1979 Royal College of Art, London. Awarded M.A.R.C.A.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1971-82 Various employment throughout Europe, including England, Holland, France and Germany.
1983 Commenced Artist-in-Residence at the Western Australian Institute of Technology; also teaching a course in Video/Performance.
Artist-in-Residence at W.A.C.A.E., Mt. Lawley Campus.
1984/85 Working as an Arts Officer for Praxis Inc., with special responsibilities as curator of exhibitions and editor of the journal *Praxis M*.
1984 Guest curator at I.M.A. (Brisbane) of Media Space installation (also presenting Lecture/Performance in Brisbane).
1985 Presently Head of Sculpture at Sydney College of the Arts.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

1971-82 Various exhibitions throughout Europe, including England, Holland, France and Germany.
1983 One person exhibition of the installation "Terra Incognita Australis" at the Nexus Galleries, Fremantle, Western Australia, as part of the Perth Festival Fringe.
Open studio exhibition of the installation "Fertile Zone", WAIT campus.
Participant in the mixed exhibition "Show of Presence" at the Praxis Gallery, Fremantle, Western Australia (touring).
One person exhibition of the installation "Voyages from Eden to Utopia; Ophiuchus", at the Praxis Gallery, Fremantle, Western Australia.
Speaker for the Salek Minc lecture series at the University of Western Australia delivering a paper entitled, "Installation: a definition by default"; together with a simultaneous exhibition of the video installation "Ab: Originality" in the Nolan Room of the Undercroft Gallery, U.W.A.
Participant in performances given at the "Wizbah" Club, Perth, Western Australia.
"Chain of Command", a performance at the Praxis Gallery, Fremantle, Western Australia.
1984 Participant in the Festival of Perth showing the installation "Fruits of the Earth; Negotiations at the Dead Centre", Western Australian Museum.
One person exhibition of the installation "Voyages from Eden to Utopia; Hercules" at the Aspek Gallery, U.K.



1984 Participant in the "Boat Show", Praxis Gallery, Fremantle, W.A.

Participant in the 2nd Australian Sculpture Triennial, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1983/84 Various media coverage (Australia) including: ABC TV, ABC Radio, 6NR Radio, 4KZZZ Radio, *Western Mail*, *Sunday Times*, *Praxis M* No.2 and No.4, *Art in Australia*; (U.K.) *Portsmouth City News*, *Radio Victory*.

continued

STATEMENT

... — ... — The Re:construction Era ... — ... —

The corner of the sofa is really the safest place to be; I brace myself into an armchair foetal, my head retracted deep into my shoulders. The right-hand side of the screen is filled by three black triangles which heave up and down in slow motion; a series of diagonal white flashes and the set fills with smoke.

... — ... —

The child recoils as two percussive bars of Beethoven's fifth symphony fly abruptly through the speaker of the sixteen inch set which accompanies the score with heavy vibrations. The child is four years old and the year 1956; "Victory at Sea" is a medium through which one world attempts to colonise another.

... — ... —

The words start to roll up over the picture and my knees relax; my brother comes to sit next to me, abandoning his prone position behind the sofa; we know the worst is over. Dad says that he fried eggs on the deck of a troop-ship; later, at the supper table, he will send morse code messages with the cutlery.

... — ... —

As the children grow, the blue light of the sitting-room fades; they re-emerge to inhabit the woods and rough shingle beaches which form the perfect container for their actions. No longer able to tolerate the gaze of adults they learn the arts of camouflage and deception, living behind the lines of the adult world, utilizing every means at their disposal to explore it without the onus of direct contact.

... — ... —

The rules are plain and simple, if we stick to them we are totally invisible to grown-ups. Their failure to see gives us a real edge, especially if we need things from their gardens which border our land. Our main camp is well out of their range, past the fringe of the poplar copse and into the wheat fields. No-one else dares go down into the camp-site because it was made by big explosions in the past.

... — ... —

The twinned craters develop a special significance for the children who regard them as signs, perhaps gifts, from a period whose power had diverted the course of their parents' lives. Immediately below the rim of the craters exists a zone of transformation; a factory site for their imagination: The factory builds bridges.

... — ... —

If you could come down the first thing that you would notice is that we've got matches. Fires are very important in this camp because down here all the earth is clay and we use the fires to bake it hard. We dig two special types of tunnel,

the first type is to mine clay out of, the others are to build the furnaces in. The furnace tunnels go straight into the bank and then we dig a hole down from higher up; around the top hole we make woven chimneys out of willow wands and then we cover them in clay and straw. We keep the fires burning all the time to bake special bricks; if you came down you could see our buildings.

... — ... —

The plasticity of the heavy Wealden clay is immediately recognised by the children as synonymous with their desire. They do not hesitate, the chosen site naturally provides a chosen material. An entire economy springs into being, reality is manufactured below ground level. No questions asked, this is an enterprise with an ulterior motive.

... — ... — ... — ... — ... — ... — ... — ... —

This time the material is not so plastic, not so compliant with my intentions. It has become sticky, not through the simple admixture of the gentle but incessant rain of those parts. No, this is a stickiness of significance, a cloying of knowledge. It seems that even raw materials have become cunning with age, developing strategies of resistance, forcing me to keep my distance.

Clay the natural; clay the historical; clay the archaeologist's best friend. What can be done with such sincerity (for what is clay if not sincere?) In a culture so proficient at knowing, so circumspect, subversion is the only possible route! For the time being (pragmatism), clay is put in harness to counter that incessant process of erosion whereby all commentaries, all texts and constructions are worn down to the status of the inevitable, the "natural" (de-fused, grounded, rendered harmless, but still intriguing enough to be profitable). For the moment clay can play the part of the fall-guy in a dramatic contest of artifice versus the natural.

... — ... —

Postscript:-

Tonight someone lies dreaming in their bed, directly above that ghost of an explosion; the building's foundations form a crust over our furnace sites: what malicious archaeology.

... — ... —

Nigel Helyer

